

STUDY OF 'BRAIN IN VAT' OR 'BRAIN IN FLUID'? SCENARIO IN NAYOMI MUNAWEERA'S WHAT LIES BETWEEN US: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Dr. SUJATA BAMANE

Associate Professor, Head of Department of English, Fergusson College (Autonomous), Pune, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT

Brain in Vat' also known as 'Brain in Jar' is the updated version Rene Descartes' 'evil demon thought experiment' by Gilbert Harman. It makes person believe that the knowledge that he/she has is the product of not his/her sensory experiences powered with actual reality. Rather the brain in vat is given a virtual stimuli by the scientist. The 17th century French mathematician and philosopher, Rene Descartes in his experiment doubts the reliability of the senses influenced by 'some malicious demon' as one of the tools of perceiving the actual reality. Hence he proposes the possibility of 'intellectual autonomy' through the application of 'good mind' if one desires to search for the absolute truth. The absence of such truth leads man to greater agony and ultimately turns him to have a distorted personality. Hence the present paper is a humble attempt to generate, develop and apply the concept of 'Brain in fluid' on the basis of the existent thought of 'brain in vat' with reference to the selected novel, What Lies Between Us (2016) by Nayomi Munaweera, a Sri Lanka based woman writer. The researcher will attempt to explore the inner personality of the female protagonist, Ganga who is shattered between no. of lies and secrets. The present paper will also address the questions like Can the condition of Ganga be judged like a 'Brain in Vat' or 'Brain in Fluid'? Are there some evil experimenters in her life that exert influence on her brain? Or does her Brain generate meaning at uncertain level? What illusive reality that she lives with? Can she reach to the absolute truth in her life? Does the absolute truth transform one's 'self' and so on.

KEYWORDS: 'Brain in Fluid', 'Brain in Vat', Demon, Identity, Reality, Sensory Experiences & Truth

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INTRODUCTION

Human mind has immense capacity to perceive the world through number of other subsequent means besides the five primary senses: Ear, Eyes, Nose, Skin and Tongue. However, these basic senses are the main receptors of the information around which is transferred to brain. (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/brain-waves/201411/the-five-senses-and-the-nature-perception>) A large no. of philosophical theories is formulated to understand the foundation for all knowledge/predictions and the varied ways of perceiving it. The concept of 'predictive brain' is the outcome of the recent discovery of neuroscience that records the constant stimulation of neurons in brain. The branch of neuroscience states that the past experience is the basis of such predictions. (<https://www.edge.org/response-detail/26707>) Experts differ in their views regarding the sources of knowledge and its altering authenticity. Philosopher like, Jean Piaget has talked about the importance of sensory experiences for obtaining knowledge whereas the 17th century French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes proposes the possibility of 'intellectual autonomy' through the application of 'good mind' if one desires to search for the absolute truth. He emphasizes the significance of the 'conscious self as the foundation for all knowledge'. In his experiment he doubts the reliability of the senses influenced by 'some malicious demon' as one of the tools of

perceiving the actual reality. Along with Descartes as an innate, Plato too asserts on innatism and the notion of ‘mind born with ideas, knowledge and belief’. However, on the contrary the empiricist, John Locke refutes the existence of any innate ideas in mind and objects its being the authentic source of truth as he considers mind as a tabula rasa or a ‘blank slate’. He discards Descartes’ and Plato’s belief of mind’s ‘possessing propositional knowledge’ and detects it merely an ‘ability to organize’. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innatism>) In his ‘Art of Worldly Wisdom’ (1637) Baltasar Gracian, a Spanish-born Jesuit priest teaches that “even knowledge has to be in fashion.” (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265239520_The_Art_of_Worldly_Wisdom) Hence, the concept of ‘Brain in Vat’ that a philosopher, Hilary Putnam said about in his 1981 book, ‘Reason, Truth and History’ can be taken as somewhat ‘in fashion’ as the updated version of Rene Descartes’ ‘evil demon thought experiment’. Descartes had used the some devilish being in place of vat, who according to him influenced his sensory experiences with its devious power. Later on the vat was proposed by the American philosopher, Gilbert Harman in 1973 to understand the modern angle of psychology and neuroscience. (<https://sites.psu.edu/bernickerpassionblog/2016/01/28/brain-in-a-vat/>) The idea of ‘Brain in vat’ (BIV) simply deals with brain’s ignorance of its spatial identity. The brain’s unawareness of its domain whether being in skull or a vat or in fluid leaves it oblivious about its understanding of experiences whether real or illusive. Since, brain as discussed earlier is the generator of perceptions or knowledge, the brain in vat is forced to access the ‘virtual reality’ instead of ‘actual reality’ based on the information fed by the scientists/super-computer as per its updated version. For instance, the ‘Brain in Vat’ scenario is reflected in the movie, ‘The Matrix’ where there is a computer-generated dream world.

The sensory experiences are the means of knowledge/truth. This absolute truth makes man’s life meaningful that gives him direction to take action and build his identity. On the contrary the absence of such truth leads him to greater agony and ultimately can turn him to have a distorted personality. Descartes while sharing his experience of sensory perception says, “some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me”. Such possibility of demonic overpowering over sensory experiences are not accepted by Descartes as the authentic source of ultimate truth. However, for Descartes he does exist despite his inability to experience the real world and values/acknowledges his existence even though it is needed to be deceived. The contradiction in his version of experiment is well answered by Descartes himself with his famous concept, cogito, ergo sum (“I think, therefore I am”). Thus, based on certain philosophical and psychological implications of Descartes’ ‘evil demon thought experiment’ and its latest version, ‘Brain in Vat’ or ‘Brain in jar’, the present paper makes humble and inter-disciplinary attempt to understand and develop a new perspective of this concept in the form of ‘brain in fluid’. The paper is a bold endeavour to trace the working of an individual’s brain, its connection with sensory signals and its role in forming the perceptions of outside world that directly affects the action and identity of an individual. It is very difficult to pin down the concept of ‘brain in fluid’ since there are numerous contradictory interpretations of theories of perceptions and acquisition of knowledge. Thus in order to check the possibility of applying the previous versions of ‘Brain in Vat’ concept and generating the scenario of ‘brain in fluid’, it is necessary to study the ‘sensory Memory’ of the female protagonist, Ganga and explore the truth that she attains in the novel, ‘What Lies Between Us’ by Nayomi Munaweera.

Introduction to Nayomi Munaweera

Winner of the Regional Commonwealth Book Prize for her first novel, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, Nayomi Munaweera is a Sri Lankan-American woman novelist. She is the dual citizen of Sri Lanka and the US, hence has ‘half-in’ and ‘half-

out' experiences. Being an outsider, she believes that it gives a 'freshness of perception'. Beginning with an ending is the particularity of her writing style as far as the novel, 'What Lies Between Us' is concerned.

Introduction to Novel

Published in 2016, the second novel, *What Lies Between Us* by Munaweera is the heart wrenching story of mother and daughter, who later on becomes mother of a daughter. It won the Sri Lankan National Book Award for best English novel and the Godage Award for Best English Novel. Recently, it 'won the "Best Novel in English" award at the 60th State Literary Awards held in September 2017 to honour best writing from Sri Lanka in Tamil and English.' The novel is appreciated for its unique technique of 'truth-tell through fiction'. It is an outcome of writer's experience and perception of the world around as an insider and outsider as her 'half-in and half-out experience began when her family fled Sri Lanka in 1970s and moved to Nigeria'. Hence it is also described as 'self-referential' book. The novel is divided into three sections: Prologue, Parts and Epilogue. It begins with the narration of the story of a narrator as a child and ends with her being mother of one daughter. The character of a narrator, Ganga is delineated enjoying her carefree and joyful childhood with her parents and servants, Samson and Sita. The story takes turn when her 'cherished friendship' becomes a cause of mental trauma. The sudden and mysterious death of her father, Thatha forces her and her mother to immigrate to USA. However, Ganga moves on with her haunting past and repressible dream like memories that collapses her happy married life with Daniel. '... her secrets and scars continue to corrode her life, past and present collide, driving her to commit a single, possibly unforgivable crime ... (of murdering her own child and later on a suicidal attempt).' (Text Cover).

"All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason." - Immanuel Kant, Kant: Critique of Pure Reason <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/senses>

The entire story of Ganga seems to be her strenuous journey for getting and understanding the truth hidden inside and outside. The famous neuroscientist, Anil Seth says, "We don't just passively perceive the world, we actively generate it. The world as we experience it, comes as much, if not more, from the inside-out, as from the outside-in." (<https://theweekenduniversity.com/blog/3-experiments-from-neuroscience-which-prove-reality-is-a-hallucination/>) Hence if the inside is the reflection of outside and vice versa, it is necessary to unfold the inner sensory experiences of the female protagonist in relation with the experiences in the exterior world, as the world around is full of sensory signals: Hearing, Sight, Smell, Touch and Taste. The sensory information received through these sensory receptors is stored in Sensory Memory (SM) after the original impetus has terminated. Following are the major features of sensory memory discussed by the researcher, Sarah Fader (2018) in an article, 'What Sensory Memory Is And Why It's Important':

- As there are five senses, there are five types of sensory memory. However, all types of sensory memory have some common characteristics. These characteristics remain true regardless of which sense is being used, or which part of the brain is processing the memory.
- First, sensory memory does not require your attention. It is completely automatic. Your brain takes in the information provided through use of the senses and processes it without you having to consciously think about it or do anything.
- Second, sensory memory is only stored in the part of the brain associated with the sense that provided the information. For example, sensory memory from auditory stimuli will only be processed or stored by the part of the brain that relates to hearing.

- Third, sensory memory is extremely detailed. Even though it only lasts a short time, it is extremely sharp in the mind during that brief period. For example, if you look at an object and quickly close your eyes, the sensory memory of the object will be so clear that you will feel as though you still have your eyes open.
- Finally, sensory memory is extremely brief, and is continuously replaced by new sensory memories as stimuli is taken in through the senses. Once sensory memory is gone there is no way to recover it. Unless the brain relegates the information to short-term memory, the sensory memories are lost very quickly.
<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/memory/what-sensory-memory-is-and-why-its-important/>

There are three types of Sensory Memory: (<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-psychology/chapter/types-of-memory/>)

- Iconic Memory - 'Iconic memory refers to memories created through vision or sight'.
- Echoic memory - Echoic memory refers to the memories created through hearing.
- Haptic Memory - Haptic Memory starts working when body feels a touch of anything.

Since the novel is the narration of a story of the secrets and lies between mothers and daughters transpired out of her fickle memory, it is interesting to study the functioning of her sensory memory and its impact on her relation with her mother, Amma, her father, Thatha, Samson, Daniel, her daughter, Bodhi and her own 'self' in relation with the story of Moon Bear and her Cub narrated in the 'Prologue' to the novel.

MOON BEAR AND HER CUB

The 'Prologue' to the novel contains the mythological story of moon bear, the 'great ursine ancestor' and her cub. It sets the stage for the story ahead. Considering the Chinese medicinal value of bear bile 'to remove heat from the body', thousands of bears are caged in 'crush cages'. Later on their stomach is slit to take out the bile. Author narrates how come the crying of little cub is being sensed by its mother and 'she broke through her own iron bars.' Through the sensory experience of hearing the cry of the baby, the mother senses the life of her baby being in danger and indulges her in racy actions of reaching out to her cub, 'pulling it' to her, 'strangling it' and 'smashing her own head against the wall until she (herself dies)'. (WLBu:2) As per John Lock's views hearing the cry proves to be the right source of knowledge of cub's being in danger. However, in Descartes' views this 'echoic memory' is processed further intensely by brain that generates a prediction based on some 'pre-existing information' of motherly instincts and humans evil intentions present in Moon Bear's mind. Moon Bear reaches out to the 'absolute truth' of mother-child bond by eliminating the illusive reality of her butcherly treatment to her cub and devastative end of their existence. Hence, Moon Bear's brain is not in vat as her sensory experiences are powered with innate reality.

GANGA'S ATTAINING AGE

'De Beauvoir talks about the process of 'becoming flesh', which is the process whereby one comes to experience oneself as a sexual, bodily being exposed to another's gaze' writes Felicity Joseph (2008) in an article, Becoming A Woman: Simone de Beauvoir on Female Embodiment https://philosophynow.org/issues/69/Becoming_A_Woman_Simone_de_Beauvoir_on_Female_Embodiment. In her narration, Ganga recalls her mother saying excitedly, "No one can see you. If man sees you, it will be bad luck." (WLBu:49) Ganga's experience of her attaining of age brings her to various considerations. The sight of 'small blooming red frangipani' on the

back of her white school uniform does not really make Ganga distress initially. Rather this 'iconic memory' created through the sight of red spot makes her aware of her attaining of age and what does it mean. In fact, it is the pre-existing information fed by her mother stimulates her sensory experience of sight of 'thick blood' to accept it though with panic and go into further action. She narrates, "I know what is happening. Amma has described blood flowing, pain, pad, the whole thing. ..., so I'm not scared. I walk stiffly into Pumie's bathroom and lock myself in." (WLBu:49) Ganga enjoys her 'intellectual autonomy' in the view of Descartes through the application of her 'good mind' with past information. The 'vat' in the 'Brain in Vat' in this situation is Amma, Ganga's mother. However, Amma's belief of maintaining those 'traditional seven days' by not getting exposed to 'man's lust' or 'woman's envy' could not convince Ganga. Consequently, unable to stand it anymore she 'tugs aside Amma's old red sari' and looks out unto the garden only to have forbidden sight of Samson. She narrates,

"There with his back to me is Samson, and even as I am pulling the sari back, he turns as if pulled by my gaze and looks straight at me and his hand goes to his gaped mouth." (WLBu:51)

The sensory experience of the sight of Samson, though a 'cherished friend' of Ganga arouses a very 'heart throbbing' sensations for two reasons. Firstly, it is Samson's endorsing 'gaping mouth' and secondly the feeling of 'unravelling all of Amma's plans, all of Thatha's trust'. In fact, it is the pre-existing information of the petrifying consequences of exposing herself to the sight of men imprinted in Ganga's brain leads her to self-interrogation. The 'iconic memory' as a result of the mere sight of tabooed sight of man assures her being dragged ruthlessly under the 'demonic possession'. She does exist only to undergo the psychosomatic pain. She appears to be completely paralysed to enjoy the significance of seventh day, the 'auspicious time', day of her rebirth, of embracing light. She perceives the entire celebration as an 'illusory reality' and registers the memory of Samson as 'demons' and cause of 'shame' as 'absolute truth'. She narrates, "The memory of Samson turning to look straight at me jabs like a thorn. Shame flushes through me ..." (WLBu: 53-54). Ironically, on the day of her attaining age, she attains and clings to certain absolute truths: 1. 'I know I have done what cannot be undone'. (WLBu:52) 2. 'Shame is female; shame is the price I must pay for this body.' (WLBu:56) 3. 'I was separated from myself.' 4. 'No one knew, no one suspected.' 5. 'My sin is only and ever my own.' (WLBu:61) Thus, in a very artistic manner through these utterances Nayomi Munaweera elicits the acetous truth of female destiny. Ganga's brain is completely the captive of age-old notions of what is being female.

GANGA AND SAMSON

The novel under study is a passionate revelation of what does it mean being woman who is driven by her demonic past memories. It reminds what Descartes believed during his experiments. He writes in his writing, First Meditation, "Some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me". <https://genius.com/2520922> He has denied the senses as the only authentic source of truth. Ganga's perception of Samson's presence in her life is completely based on her sensory experiences that are triggered by the innate knowledge. It's true what the novelist, Vladimir Nabokov says, "Nothing revives the past so completely as a smell that was once associated with it." <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/326452> In one of the incidents merely hearing the question posed by her friend, Pumie, Ganga once again experiences the 'seeing touch' of Samson's distant look. The haunting memory of the sight of Samson during her menstrual cycle and his sensing her private truth force her to go sleepless nights and develop a delusional disorder. She is unable to express it to her mother as she considers it to be 'unimaginable' with a girl from good family. The story writer, Annes Jung too expresses woman's helplessness in the book, Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey, "To

voice a pain, to divulge a secret was considered sacrilege, a breach of family trust.” (1987:109) Consequently, Ganga is seen oscillating between illusion and reality. Whenever she hears Samson behind, she vainly affirms his being ‘just old friend’. But the ‘echoic memory’ of his presence entangles her judgement and things start pouring out of her broken memory. She narrates her perception of his ‘lurching’ against her, ‘hands fumbling on her chest, rubbing against her nipples’, rubbing against her skin, ‘fingers groping and entering sacred space’, his whispering against her hair, “Don’t tell. Don’t tell. Your Amma will leave.” (WLBu: 63). Further the ‘iconic memory’ created by the sight of ‘shorts’ that her aunt had sent from America panics her as it brings her the ‘memory of his hand, huge and tight around (her) thigh.’ (WLBu: 64). The empiricist, John Locke rejects the existence of any innate ideas in mind and considers mind as a tabula rasa or a ‘blank slate’ and detects it having merely an ‘ability to organize’. In case of Ganga, her mind is not a ‘blank slate’, hence she loses her ability to organize these ideas as she was somehow was threatened with consequences of violating orthodox notions related to female body and its purity and ultimately her right to survive as normal human being. Her mother can be considered as merely an instrument to transfer these rigid age-old ideas and making her daughter’s life hell by throwing her into the pit of guilt. Consequently her brain that can be perceived as ‘brain in fluid’ generates meaning based on the combinations of different sensory signals with her mind’s ‘possessing propositional knowledge’ imbibed by her mother. Such kind of functioning of brain can be better understood on the basis of what the neuroscientist, Anil Seth said in his Ted Talk on Your Brain Hallucinates your Conscious Reality (2017):

The perception has to be a process of informed guesswork in which the brain combines these sensory signals with its prior expectations or beliefs about the way the world is to form its best guess of what caused those signals. The brain doesn't hear sound or see light. What we perceive is its best guess of what's out there in the world.
https://www.ted.com/talks/anil_seth_how_your_brain_hallucinates_your_conscious_reality/transcript?language=en#t-1008828

Based on the experiment of the neuroscientist, Anil Seth, the functioning of Ganga’s brain can be studied. In her narration she says, ‘something deep in me (her) shrinks every time a boy’s eyes touch me (her).’ In school, seeing a boy’s look touching her body, her ‘brain’s predictions influence her conscious experience of the present moment’ and makes its best guess about what caused those signals. Consequently, she sees the best ‘possibility of Samson’s hands reaching out from these stranger’s arms and grabbing her soul.’ (WLBu:110). She journeys between ‘seeing’ touch and ‘feeling touch’. Similarly, the ‘haptic memory’ created through a touch of her husband Daniel’s kiss, her brain strongly and very quickly hallucinates her conscious self and influences her present experience of his soft kiss and she narrates, ‘I feel the tightly wound cocoon of myself loosen and begin to unravel,...’ (WLBu:155) ‘Water’ image plays a prominent role in strengthening ‘iconic’ as well as ‘echoic’ memory of Ganga. When she hears ‘the smash of falling water, see the curve of a moonlit tree over the rushing, tumbling river’ outside her living room window, her ‘predictive brain’ starts the guesswork and takes her away from the present reality. The ‘controlled hallucination’ of brain compels her to apprehend ‘the ghost of one drowned man ‘her father’ rises from the water. The shadow of that other lost man ‘Samson’ waits on the bank.’ (WLBu:111) The image of ‘water’ for Ganga means the ‘image of bodies in water’. It is said that “There is nothing as powerful as mother’s love, and nothing as healing as a child’s soul.” <http://www.quoteambition.com/mother-daughter-quotes/> However, in case of Ganga as a mother, things are completely opposite. She does not find her daughter, Bodhi as a source of healing. Instead the ‘iconic memory’ created by seeing Bodhi ‘looking into her eyes, deep and long’ disturbs her inside. She fears that ‘her eyes track her like hunter’ and might ‘trace the ‘corrupt core’ in her with the help of ‘ancient knowledge’ ‘that she had

come armed with.' (WLBu:139) She feels 'as if she can read secrets there, as if she sees entirely how I am..' (WLBu:234) She behaves as if her brain is locked in her own skull completely disconnected from the outside world. She now does not need any sensory vibes from outside. Her 'brain in fluid' hallucinates her by generating the meaning of 'hearing Samson's voice in her head' and the fleeting image of Samson appears right in front of her along with the 'river water falling on her face like tears'. (WLBu:246)

GANGA AND HER 'SELF'

The philosophical doctrine, 'innatism' promoted by Descartes and Plato holds the belief that human mind is pre-equipped with ideas/knowledge and not a 'blank slate' at the time of birth. Hence, it is worth what Ganga in her journey of discovery, realizes in her biology class 'that a female human carries all of her eggs in her from birth. So whatever Amma has survived, as a child, as a girl, I had been there inside her, waiting to spill into the me I've become.' (WLBu:116) In her self-assessment she can trace in her 'the ache of her (mother's) brokenness' and its transition to her 'along with every other nutrient' when she was 'just a curl of a creature'. She senses her action of keeping her mother waiting outside her bedroom for a long time as a reflection of the same traits of her mother. The voice of Bodhi crying and screaming creates the 'echoic memory' in her sensory memory, but her brain overpowered by all past conscious and subconscious memories generate the meaning on the basis of these innate traits and compels her to exhibit more hostility towards Bodhi by leaving her unattended.

It's true to certain extent of Descartes' refuting the authenticity of sensory experiences to reach out to the absolute truth. But innate knowledge too sometimes has its own restrictions in some cases. In case of Ganga's holding the truth about her child abuse experience ultimately proves wrong when her mother unfolds the layers of this shameful act and reveals the evil-doer behind it. On Ganga's increasing self-doubt, her mother in a gentle and heartbroken voice uncovers the 'truth embedded in reality' (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/top-10-differences-between-truth-reality-jack-nargundkar>) that she tends to live in. She blurts out, 'No, baby. It wasn't Samson. He didn't do anything to you. Samson always tried to protect you.' (WLBu:267) The 'iconic memory' created by listening to mother's words, her brain shifts itself quickly to register 'haptic memory' created in the past through the touch of 'hand on her shoulder', sensing 'a blast of arrack' in her face. Gradually, she reaches to the 'absolute truth', the bitter truth and brushes off the illusive reality that she was possessing- 'My body naming its perpetrator', her father. (WLBu:268) Her 'haptic memory' that she senses transits now to the 'iconic memory' created on the sight of her husband, Daniel's 'touching', 'hugging', 'comforting' Bodhi in her absence disturbs her a lot. The perception of Daniel's treatment to Bodhi now is strongly registered by her brain again on the basis of innate knowledge she has gained recently. It stimulates her madly to take further action of protecting her child from that abominable touch. In this situation now, what Descartes holds is true, "some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me". Her sensory experience of Daniel-Bodhi's relationship (father-daughter relationship) might be untrue. The malicious demon in her past has possessed her mind and hallucinates, deceives her 'conscious self' that fails to judge the present scenario. Consequently, she is instigated to poison her child only to protect her and observes her child 'cradled in the car seat like a nut inside its shell.' (WLBu:272) Ganga's brain in the end does not act like a 'Brain in Vat' in a fake reality. As in the 'Brain in Vat' scenario person is not fed the appropriate stimuli. 'So the brain in a jar has become a potentially misleading avatar of self. Its grey folded surface represents an illusory boundary between everything we know and everything outside of

that knowledge.’ (<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/07/brain-in-a-jar/534837/>) However, in this case she acts as per her brain’s prediction based on the past knowledge that keeps altering. It apparently leads her to ‘thicket of views’. Her’s can be described as a ‘brain in fluid’ scenario. Her last act of reaching out to the absolute reality of mother-child bond though serves the purpose of author i. e ‘a need to know about the nature of love between a mother and child’ (WLBu:2), it makes this inhuman ‘illusive reality’ of ‘unspeakable act’ of ‘maternal altruistic filicide’ obvious and socially and legally unacceptable. Through the psychological lenses, Ganga’s ‘self’ faces the ‘difficulty in sustaining any sentiment du reel.’ To put it in Minkowski’s words, referred by the writer, R. D. Laing there is lack of ‘vital contact’ with the world’ (1959:137) as she was deserted by her husband. In her forced secluded state of mind, ‘her visual and auditory hallucinations’ become active. Consequently, her ‘false-self system’ perceives relatively low ‘coefficient’ of realness’. (1959:138)

CONCLUSIONS

Although it depends on the other ‘perceptible faculties’, brain plays a crucial role in generating meaning and leading an individual to the destination of truth or a ‘true’ and ‘justified’ self. So this relation between perception and ‘self’ in fact is nothing but like the metaphorical age-old dilemma of the first chicken or the egg? Similarly, Humian doctrine, ‘I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception’ contradicts to Descartes doctrine, ‘I never can catch a perception without myself.’ Or even the Locke, who regards ‘the identity of (mental) substance as the logically independent of the identity of the self.’ (1979:172) Ganga’s character in the analysis above is seen initially catching her ‘self’ through the perception of the world projected through various sources and tries to catch perception through her ‘self’ in the end. The perceptions that she catches are through her ‘sense experience’, a broader term used by the philosopher, John Foster in his article on In Self-Defence. (1979:175) However, the perceptions that she catches makes her appear with her divided self since she appears to maintain the ‘outward semblance of normality’ while engaged with the abnormal deed of killing her child in the name of protection. With reference to R. D. Laing’s study on Psychotic Developments, it can be said that the ‘unrealness of perception’ and the falsity of the purposes of the false-self system’ (1959:138) affects Ganga’s inner self. The researcher views her brain differently and dares to perceive it as a ‘brain in fluid’, for a substance/stimuli that lacks the proper shape, size or smell. And the writer Munaweera herself describes her character, Ganga’s trauma as “coated, white fog, misty truth.” <https://www.mercurynews.com/2016/02/08/nayomi-munaweera-author-of-what-lies-between-us-says-she-has-to-inhabit-her-narrative-before-writing-it/> Sometimes her brain is found to be captive of ‘age-old notions’ imbibed on her mind by parents, of mother’s ‘manufactured reality’, of ‘spatial reality’ or of ‘actual reality’. These frequently alterable influences lead her brain to generate multiple truths and affect her ‘waking existence’ severely that brings injustice with the life of her child and herself and completely transform her ‘now self’. It’s true what Rick Hansin, a neuropsychologist and Richard Mendijs, a neurologist say about brain and self, ‘Self never come forward on its own.’ (2009:213) ‘In the brain, every manifestation of self is impermanent. The self is continually constructed, deconstructed, and constructed again.’ (2009:212) Whether the ‘brain in jar’ or in skull or ‘brain in fluid’ as the philosopher, John Foster views, ‘we can form a conception of subject that is both intuitive and intelligible, only thus that we can do justice to ourselves.’ (1979:183) Perhaps, in case of Ganga’s story that comes out of her greasy memory, it is like ‘sifting the truth from the spin’. (<https://www.thehindu.com/books/literary-review/Inheritance-of-loss/article14553179.ece>)

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AUTHOR PROFILE



Dr. Sujata Bamane holds M.A. BEd. SET, Ph.D. degree in English. She has been teaching English literature for the last 24 years. She is an Associate Professor and Head, Department of English in Fergusson College (Autonomous), Pune. She is a Research Guide for SPPU and Fergusson College, Research Center. She is the Chairman of B.O.S. English of Department of English, Fergusson College. She has Presented papers in the international conferences held within India at Pune, Nasik, Mumbai, Satara Bangalore, Chandigarh and the international conferences held outside India in the countries like at Colombo, Sri Lanka; Vienna, Austria and Bangkok, Thailand. She has published around 18 research papers in the National and International Journals and Edited Books. Out of which three research papers are published in USA, Vienna and London based International Journals. Recently she has published a book entitled, "Feminism: A Multifaceted Discourse (A Study of Selected Women's Writings)" in August 2019. She is a recognized Guide in English of Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune and Research Center, Fergusson College (Autonomous), Pune. Her two students have completed M.Phil. by SPPU and three students are pursuing PhD. She has worked as external evaluator for Research Thesis, research papers and book. Also she has worked as Subject Expert and Internal Referee for Pre-Ph.D Registration Presentation and Ph.D Viva. She has been declared recently as one of the Top 1% researchers on Academia.edu. She has participated in All India Radio Symposium to mark the death Centenary of Mark Twain. She has participated as an Expert in a Live Programme 'Sakhi Sahayadri' by Doordarshan Sahyadri Vahini on the topic- 'Badalatya Jagatil Engrajiche Mahatva'. (2019). She has worked as an Organizing Secretary for the State Level Workshop organized for students on 'Holistic Healing: A Journey to Optimal Wellness'. She was the Coordinator for Naturopathy Courses conducted for College Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff. She has worked as Judge for Inter-Collegiate Debate Competition at various colleges and as Subject Expert on the various Interview Panels. She has worked as Chairman and a member of Local Inquiry Committees. She is interested in British, Indian literature and Women's Writing in English. She had been conferred with the 'Mahilaratna' puskar by Ahilyadevi Samajik and Shaikshanik VikasSanstha, Dhondewadi, Dist. Satara in 2006 for working in the field of women literature and bringing awareness among women.